General Assembly

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Agenda item 119 (*a*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/56/583/Add.1)*]

56/146. Equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies

The General Assembly,

Taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/76 of 25 April 2001[1] and Economic and Social Council decision 2001/275 of 24 July 2001,

Reaffirming the importance of the goal of universal ratification of the United Nations human rights instruments,

Welcoming the significant increase in the number of ratifications of United Nations human rights instruments, which has especially contributed to their universality,

Reiterating the importance of the effective functioning of treaty bodies established pursuant to United Nations human rights instruments for the full and effective implementation of those instruments,

Recalling that, with regard to the election of the members of the human rights treaty bodies, the Commission on Human Rights has recognized the importance of giving consideration in their membership to equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and representation of the principal legal systems, and of bearing in mind that the members shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity, and shall be of high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights,

Recalling also that the Commission on Human Rights has encouraged States parties to United Nations human rights treaties, individually and through meetings of States parties, to consider how to give better effect, inter alia, to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of treaty bodies,

Expressing concern at the clear regional imbalance in the current composition of the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, with the exception of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is applying a quota system in the distribution of its seats by regional groups,

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[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 3* (E/2001/23), chap. II, sect. A.

Noting in particular that the status quo tends to be particularly detrimental to the election of experts from some regional groups,

Convinced that the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies is perfectly compatible and can be fully realized and achieved in harmony with the need to ensure gender balance and the representation of the principal legal systems in those bodies and the high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights of their members,

1. *Encourages* States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments to establish quota distribution systems by geographical region for the election of the members of the treaty bodies;

2. *Calls upon* the States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments to include, as an agenda item at their forthcoming meetings, the establishment of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, based on the recommendations of the Commission on Human Rights and the Economic and Social Council and the provisions of the present resolution;

3. *Recommends*, when establishing the quota for each geographical region in each treaty body, the introduction of flexible procedures that encompass the following criteria:

(*a*) Each of the five regional groups established by the General Assembly must be assigned a quota of the membership of each treaty body in equivalent proportion to the number of States parties to the instrument that it represents;

(*b*) There must be provision for periodic revisions that reflect the relative changes in the geographical distribution of States parties;

(*c*) Automatic periodic revisions should be envisaged in order to avoid amending the text of the instrument when the quotas are revised;

4. *Stresses* that the process needed to achieve the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies can contribute to raising awareness of the importance of gender balance, the representation of the principal legal systems and the principle that the members of the treaty bodies shall be elected and shall serve in their personal capacity, and shall be of high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights.

88th plenary meeting
19 December 2001